Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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First regular session of 2018
London, 3–4 May 2018

Summary of deliberations

I. Introduction

1. The first regular session of 2018 of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), chaired by the Secretary-General and hosted by the International Maritime Organization, was held in the United Nations Room of the Four Seasons Trinity Hotel, in London, on 3 and 4 May 2018.

2. Held in retreat format, the session consisted of three segments, on the following themes: (a) the state of the world; (b) the socioeconomic implications of the "fourth industrial revolution" for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and (c) fostering innovation in the United Nations system.

3. During a working lunch held on 3 May, the Board also addressed United Nations system-wide action on gender parity as well as the issues of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, engaging with the Special Adviser on Policy, the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the Victims' Rights Advocate and the Chair of the High-level Committee on Management, the latter of whom had led the work of the CEB Task Force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system.

4. The present summary highlights the main takeaways from the session.

II. Segment 1 — state of the world

5. The Secretary-General offered an analysis of political realities and framed his remarks by deliberating on how the United Nations system could be most helpful in addressing current challenges while remaining wary of changing power dynamics and relations, increased volatility and the multiplication of crises.

6. The ensuing discussion touched on, among other issues, the setback in the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the risks for peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and beyond, the broadening nature of the Middle East crisis and its regional and interregional repercussions, the changing nature of peacekeeping operations, the acceleration of climate change, and the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

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7. The Board's discussion also included an overview of the world economy, with a projected annual growth rate of 3.9 per cent for the next two years. The Board noted that this would be the fastest global growth since 2011 and, in some regions of the world, the longest period of growth in decades. Some concern was raised about rising financial risks linked to a possible debt crisis, combined with a global rise in inequalities.

8. The Board also addressed the impact of increases in extreme poverty despite positive overall trends in poverty reduction in recent years. The critical role of jobs and the future of work in the context of population growth were additional topics of discussion. Conflict, climate change and population growth were seen as being among the drivers of poverty.

9. The Board discussed recent tensions in world trade and the slowdown in the settlement of trade disputes. The potential ramifications of a trade war could be extremely serious and would negatively and disproportionately affect vulnerable economies and the poor. Members agreed on the importance of bringing various trade actors to the table to find new ways to address current concerns and ease tensions.

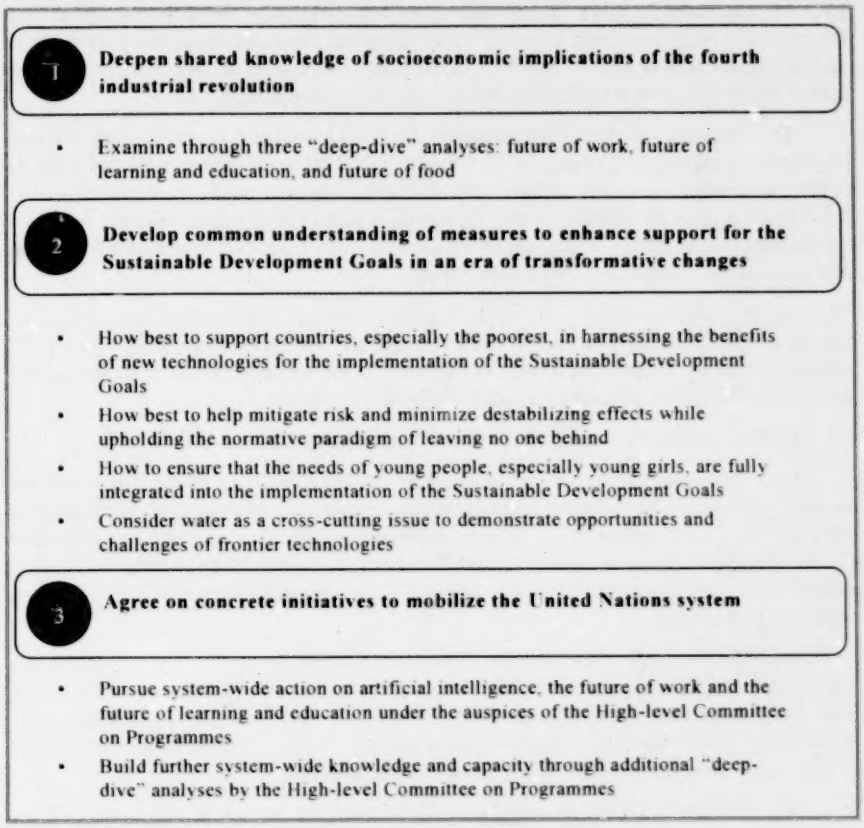
10. The Board renewed a call for multilateral solutions to address increasing protectionism and called for strengthened and targeted communications and engagement with various stakeholders to advance the understanding of and support for the work of the United Nations.

III. Segment 2 — socioeconomic implications of the "fourth industrial revolution" for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

11. At its previous session, held in November 2017, CEB had held an in-depth discussion on the opportunities and challenges created by frontier technologies, focusing in particular on artificial intelligence, biotechnology, cyberspace and new weaponry. Members had agreed that the United Nations system had a role to play in helping countries to harness the benefits of technological innovations for sustainable development while trying to minimize the risks inherent in those emerging technologies. Recognizing the need to further deepen its understanding of the socioeconomic implications of rapidly advancing technologies during the so-called fourth industrial revolution and their impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially for the poorest and those furthest behind, CEB had tasked the High-level Committee on Programmes with carrying out a number of "deep-dive" analyses.

12. Accordingly, in segment 2 of its present session, the Board heard presentations by the Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Guy Ryder, on the future of work; by the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Audrey Azoulay, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Henrietta Fore, on the future of learning and education; and by the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, José Graziano da Silva, on the future of food, all of which were based on the comprehensive analyses carried out under the auspices of the High-level Committee on Programmes (see figure I). Mr. Ryder also moderated the segment.

Figure I
Overarching objectives of segment 2


1
Deepen shared knowledge of socioeconomic implications of the fourth industrial revolution
• Examine through three "deep-dive" analyses: future of work, future of learning and education, and future of food
2
Develop common understanding of measures to enhance support for the Sustainable Development Goals in an era of transformative changes
• How best to support countries, especially the poorest, in harnessing the benefits of new technologies for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
• How best to help mitigate risk and minimize destabilizing effects while upholding the normative paradigm of leaving no one behind
• How to ensure that the needs of young people, especially young girls, are fully integrated into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
• Consider water as a cross-cutting issue to demonstrate opportunities and challenges of frontier technologies
3
Agree on concrete initiatives to mobilize the United Nations system
• Pursue system-wide action on artificial intelligence, the future of work and the future of learning and education under the auspices of the High-level Committee on Programmes
• Build further system-wide knowledge and capacity through additional "deep-dive" analyses by the High-level Committee on Programmes

13. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General emphasized that the United Nations system needed to ensure that new technologies were used to deliver on the mandate of the United Nations while anticipating any negative effects associated with the application of those technologies. A youth perspective should be firmly kept in mind, especially when discussing the future-oriented topic of frontier issues.

14. On the future of work, Mr. Ryder underscored the importance of taking the right policy decisions to enable institutions to adapt and respond to technological innovations and to adequately prepare people, especially young people, for the jobs of the future. In this regard, he stressed the importance of holistic and integrated perspectives, bearing in mind that other disruptive factors were also influencing the future of work. In addition, he noted the synergy and complementarity between the ongoing system-wide efforts being carried out under the High-level Committee on Programmes and the ILO Future of Work initiative, both of which were to result in recommendations in 2019.

15. Ms. Azoulay and Ms. Fore introduced the latest thinking on the future of learning and education, highlighting the need for a balanced approach to the use of new technologies in that field, with strong support for building a system-wide approach that would help countries to deliver effective and inclusive learning outcomes in this rapidly evolving era. Stressing the importance of education, employment and protection for youth, especially girls, Ms. Fore noted the efforts of

UNICEF to enhance literacy, numeracy and skills to improve the employability of every young person.

16. Mr. Graziano da Silva, in introducing the topic of the future of food, emphasized the importance of ensuring access to technological innovations in rural areas that lacked digital access and of fostering a dialogue on how to unlock the potential of technologies for good while safeguarding against its potential for harm.

17. The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Gilbert Houngbo, speaking in his capacity as Chair of UN-Water, identified water as a cross-cutting area where new technologies were having an impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. He noted in particular the interlinkages between the technological, policy and governance dimensions of water resources management and the related challenges and opportunities.

18. Lastly, Simon Anholt, an invited guest speaker, focused on new ways to measure, understand and influence attitudes, opinions and actions vis-à-vis the United Nations based on his prior research on the ways in which countries and organizations were judged by their perceived contributions to humanity.

19. In the ensuing discussion, Board members emphasized the following:

(a) There was a need for a holistic long-term vision for a future that would be heavily influenced by frontier technologies and their broad range of implications, both positive and negative, for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. An important role for the United Nations system would be to help define and realize such a comprehensive vision, especially by supporting appropriate governance and policy choices;

(b) Technological advancements and innovations were linked to several other global trends, all equally critical, that had an impact on the realization of the 2030 Agenda and needed to be taken into account. These included growing inequalities, widespread youth unemployment and demographic changes, population movements, crime and violent conflicts, and governance challenges;

(c) While frontier technologies and innovations including big data, offered transformative potential to enable societies to leapfrog towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, poor access to even basic infrastructure posed major obstacles in this regard. That was particularly the case in developing countries, where investments in infrastructure continued to be a high priority for achieving human progress. Support for closing the digital divide needed to be scaled-up and accelerated, including through partnerships with the private sector, to ensure that technologies served the public good;

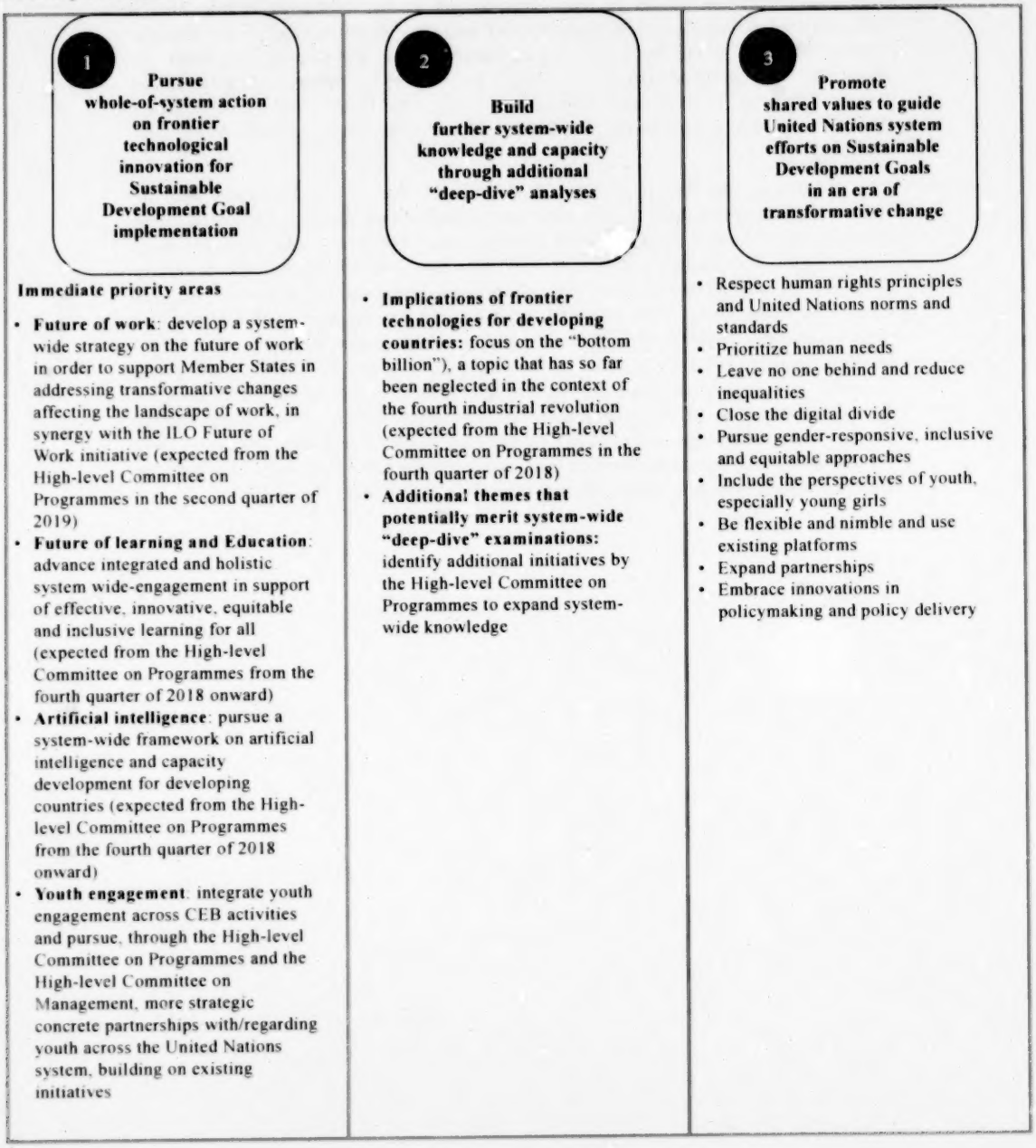
(d) As part of its efforts, the United Nations needed to help build a social contract centred on social justice, equality and inclusiveness, thereby addressing possible causes for conflict, as part of the Organization's broader focus on prevention. Above all, the United Nations system had a critical role to play in promoting an inclusive, equitable and human-rights-based approach to the development and application of new technologies and needed to exercise its normative role to represent the voices of the voiceless.

20. In summarizing the debate, the Secretary-General noted that the high degree of uncertainty regarding risks and effects, combined with the potentially disruptive impact of the fourth industrial revolution, was of great concern to the United Nations system. Any strategy to address the implications of frontier technologies for the Sustainable Development Goals needed to be centred on investing in people, especially young people, to prepare them for the actualities of the future.

21. In addition to the risks posed by new technologies in respect of enhancing and deepening inequalities among people, there was the concrete danger that the fourth industrial revolution would increase inequalities among countries. While highly industrialized economies might be fairly well equipped to absorb the socioeconomic shocks brought about by technological innovations, developing countries — especially least developed countries — might be less able to cope with their disruptive impact. Therefore, in its effort to help build human capital fit for the future, the United Nations needed to prioritize support for developing countries in adapting to the new realities.

22. In closing, the Secretary-General emphasized that it was important that the United Nations system help to steer rapid technological evolution towards an outcome that supported human progress, promoted peoples' well-being and protected their human rights. Providing a platform for dialogue that would bring together a variety of actors, including Governments, the private sector, civil society and academia, was one of the overarching objectives of United Nations engagement in this area and a clear asset of the Organization. The Board supported the recommendation of the High-level Committee on Programmes to focus on three areas for joint action going forward: (a) pursuing whole-of-system action on frontier technological innovation for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; (b) building further system-wide knowledge and capacity through additional "deep-dive" analyses; and (c) promoting shared values to guide the Sustainable Development Goal efforts of the United Nations system in an era of transformative change (see figure II).

Figure II
The way forward


1
Pursue whole-of-system action on frontier technological innovation for Sustainable Development Goal implementation
Immediate priority areas
• Future of work: develop a system-wide strategy on the future of work in order to support Member States in addressing transformative changes affecting the landscape of work, in synergy with the ILO Future of Work initiative (expected from the High-level Committee on Programmes in the second quarter of 2019)
• Future of learning and Education: advance integrated and holistic system wide-engagement in support of effective, innovative, equitable and inclusive learning for all (expected from the High-level Committee on Programmes from the fourth quarter of 2018 onward)
• Artificial intelligence: pursue a system-wide framework on artificial intelligence and capacity development for developing countries (expected from the High-level Committee on Programmes from the fourth quarter of 2018 onward)
• Youth engagement: integrate youth engagement across CEB activities and pursue, through the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, more strategic concrete partnerships with/regarding youth across the United Nations system, building on existing initiatives
2
Build further system-wide knowledge and capacity through additional "deep-dive" analyses
• Implications of frontier technologies for developing countries: focus on the "bottom billion"), a topic that has so far been neglected in the context of the fourth industrial revolution (expected from the High-level Committee on Programmes in the fourth quarter of 2018)
• Additional themes that potentially merit system-wide "deep-dive" examinations: identify additional initiatives by the High-level Committee on Programmes to expand system-wide knowledge
3
Promote shared values to guide United Nations system efforts on Sustainable Development Goals in an era of transformative change
• Respect human rights principles and United Nations norms and standards
• Prioritize human needs
• Leave no one behind and reduce inequalities
• Close the digital divide
• Pursue gender-responsive, inclusive and equitable approaches
• Include the perspectives of youth, especially young girls
• Be flexible and nimble and use existing platforms
• Expand partnerships
• Embrace innovations in policymaking and policy delivery

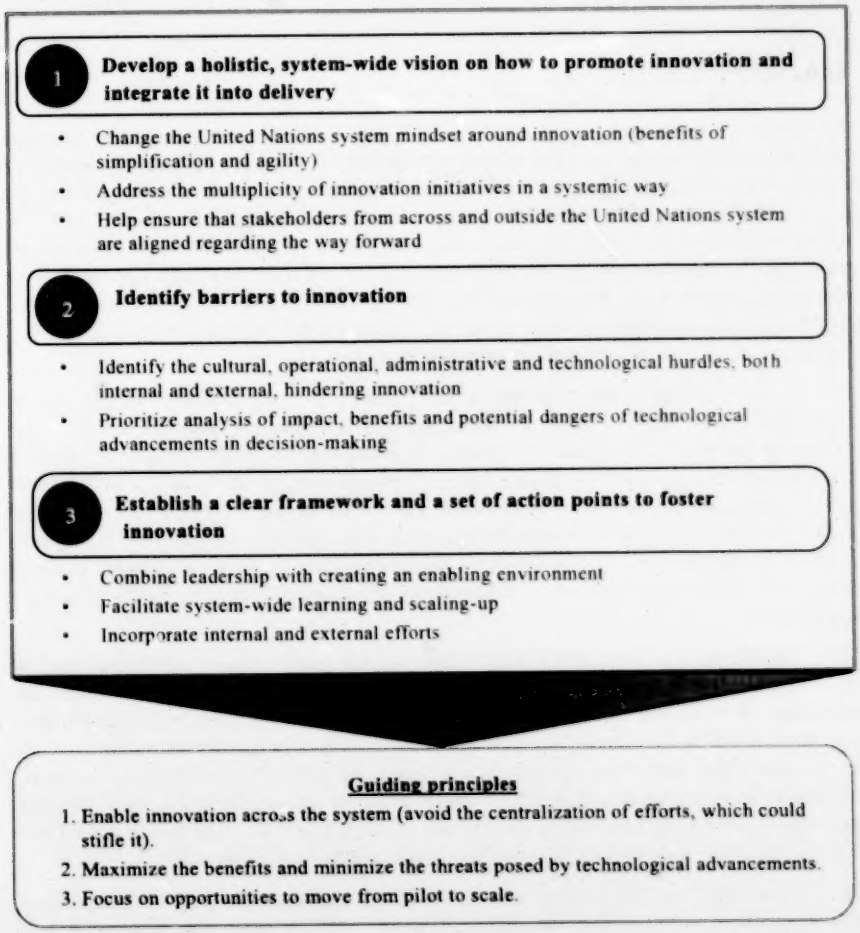
IV. Segment 3 — fostering innovation in the United Nations system

23. Building on the Board's April 2017 discussion on the numerous intersecting megatrends driving the global landscape (see CEB/2017/1), the November 2017

deliberations on frontier technologies (see CEB/2017/2) and the present review of the impacts of the fourth industrial revolution on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Secretary-General concluded the session with a call to action to integrate and mainstream innovation within and across entities of the United Nations system.

24. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General stressed that in this period of immense and rapid change, the United Nations system must change in its turn, in order to adapt to and take advantage of new working methods and modern technologies. He highlighted the United Nations system's moral obligation to its stakeholders to innovate in order to better serve its beneficiaries, more efficiently and effectively deliver on its mandates, and scale its collective impact to help meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Many examples of innovation could be found within United Nations system entities, but the Secretary-General saw a need for a more systematic approach. This vision formed the basis for the objectives of the segment (see figure III).

Figure III
Objectives and guiding principles for the work of the Board on innovation


1
Develop a holistic, system-wide vision on how to promote innovation and integrate it into delivery
• Change the United Nations system mindset around innovation (benefits of simplification and agility)
• Address the multiplicity of innovation initiatives in a systemic way
• Help ensure that stakeholders from across and outside the United Nations system are aligned regarding the way forward
2
Identify barriers to innovation
• Identify the cultural, operational, administrative and technological hurdles, both internal and external, hindering innovation
• Prioritize analysis of impact, benefits and potential dangers of technological advancements in decision-making
3
Establish a clear framework and a set of action points to foster innovation
• Combine leadership with creating an enabling environment
• Facilitate system-wide learning and scaling-up
• Incorporate internal and external efforts
Guiding principles
1. Enable innovation across the system (avoid the centralization of efforts, which could stifle it).
2. Maximize the benefits and minimize the threats posed by technological advancements.
3. Focus on opportunities to move from pilot to scale.

25. The Board's discussion was facilitated by an external innovation expert, who presented some public sector approaches to and best practices on institutionalizing

innovation with respect to three foundational components: architecture, partnerships and ecosystems, and culture and leadership. To relate the theoretical elements to the United Nations context, a number of executive heads presented their experiences in promoting and fostering innovation in their organizations. The results of a survey conducted by the Office of the Secretary-General on the existing innovation capabilities of the United Nations system provided a baseline for the discussion. The Co-Chairs of the United Nations Innovation Network, who had also been invited to contribute, introduced the Network and its achievements to date, presenting their analysis on where and what types of innovation were occurring within the United Nations system and, drawing on their members' expertise, offer actionable recommendations for the Board's consideration that corresponded to the three focus areas. Following a discussion among members, the Secretary-General set out his proposal for next steps, which was agreed upon by the Board.

26. Underpinning the discussion was the recognition that the United Nations system had a fundamental responsibility to prioritize the ethical dimension of innovation. Members agreed that there was an obligation to be considerate in using innovation, to implement appropriate safeguards within their organizations and to avoid applying any innovative technologies or techniques in a way that would undermine United Nations values or principles.

A. Innovation architecture

27. It was stressed that innovation was a discipline in the same way that strategy, planning or budgeting were disciplines. Sustained innovation required a methodical view of the innovation process, linking an organization's mission to its structures, processes and reward systems. The United Nations organizations that were the most active innovators each had structures to systematically support and scale innovation, although the structures varied in form and utilized different portfolio approaches to risk management. It was highlighted that, regardless of what approach an entity might decide to take, innovation structures needed to be placed strategically to support the entire organization, rather than being embedded in silos.

28. It was stressed that innovation that was not systematically captured and supported could not be scaled. Members agreed that scaling innovation was a top challenge for the United Nations system. As illustrated in the presentations, United Nations entities could overcome this only by moving away from an ad hoc or "gadget-based" approach to innovation and towards a more deliberate, strategic and structured process suited to their needs and circumstances. Examples of various United Nations innovation accelerators were showcased, and organizations were encouraged to learn from one another's experiences. The power of data to fuel innovation was also highlighted.

29. The Board saw the United Nations Innovation Network as a useful mechanism to make available to the entire system innovation capacity that facilitated the exchange of expertise, increased collaboration and shared resources and identified opportunities to scale efforts. The Co-Chairs of the Network confirmed that individual innovation capacities were already being leveraged through the Network for inter-agency collaboration to help meet a variety of needs arising among United Nations system entities in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Pooling resources was an effective means of delivering innovation, while centralization should be avoided.

30. It was also recognized that innovation had to be a part of every staff member's job, regardless of the role being fulfilled. Young staff in particular were seen as a fertile source of ideas and suggestions for improvement. Given that staff were a fundamental part of any innovation architecture, enabling human resources policies

were vital to fostering an innovation culture. Where necessary, leaders should bring to the attention of their governing bodies any human resources rules that would require updating in order to support the innovation endeavours of the United Nations system.

B. Innovation partnerships

31. To create a culture with a sustained capacity to innovate, organizations must be receptive to innovative ideas drawn from a variety of sources — Governments, employees, citizens, the private sector and civil society organizations — and must engage partners to help implement and scale innovations. The presentations illustrated the potential of more consistently and effectively using partnerships and ecosystem approaches to drive innovative solutions to societal problems. Several examples showcased how efficiencies achieved through partnering could be directly translated into lives saved and funds reinvested. Given that many actors operated in the broader innovation ecosystem, it was stressed that each United Nations entity needed to understand its particular role in the ecosystem in order to find the right partners and identify areas of mutual advantage.

32. Members saw value in facilitating access to one another's existing partnerships with external actors and were informed that work was ongoing within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to gather and share partnership tools such as model memorandums of understanding. United Nations entities actively partnering with one another could also help to scale up solutions, ensuring the utilization of the system's best available technology and platforms and the pooling of data and expertise across entities in the service of sustainable development.

33. It was underscored that innovation partnerships could not be valued solely on the basis of how much money they brought in. To ensure a strong foundation for collaboration, the goals and values of organizations needed to be translated into language that would resonate with innovation partners.

C. Innovation culture and leadership

34. If the United Nations system was to keep up with the changing environment and increasingly complex challenges, innovation would have to become deeply embedded in its culture. Organizations would need to value openness to new ideas, risk tolerance and the speedy adoption of innovations. In practical terms, this meant reshaping everything, from training to procurement to performance management, so that organizations could support and learn from experimentation and, over time, cultivate innovative initiatives.

35. The central role of leadership in fostering a culture of innovation within organizations was cited repeatedly throughout the segment. Members commended the prominence that the Secretary-General was giving to innovation and welcomed the expert support that the United Nations Innovation Network was providing to the Board and its member organizations to help them to effect the needed change. It was stressed that innovation meant both doing things differently and doing different things, and that it entailed reducing bureaucracy and improving working methods as much as it did using new technologies.

36. Executive heads identified a multitude of responsibilities that they had as leaders to cultivate a culture of innovation. They themselves had to act as instruments of change, share their vision and lead by example. It was important that they discover and highlight innovation already taking place, incentivize and empower people to

experiment, solicit new ideas from staff at all levels and track progress. To enable their organizations to better fulfil their mandates, leaders had to break down organizational silos, eliminate obstacles and put in place enabling systems, processes and capacities to promote innovation. Risk-taking was understood to be an inherent and necessary part of innovation, and therefore the narrative around risk had to move from compliance to empowerment. It would be necessary to engage governing bodies on the management of innovation in order to develop a mutual understanding about creating an environment that would be conducive to it.

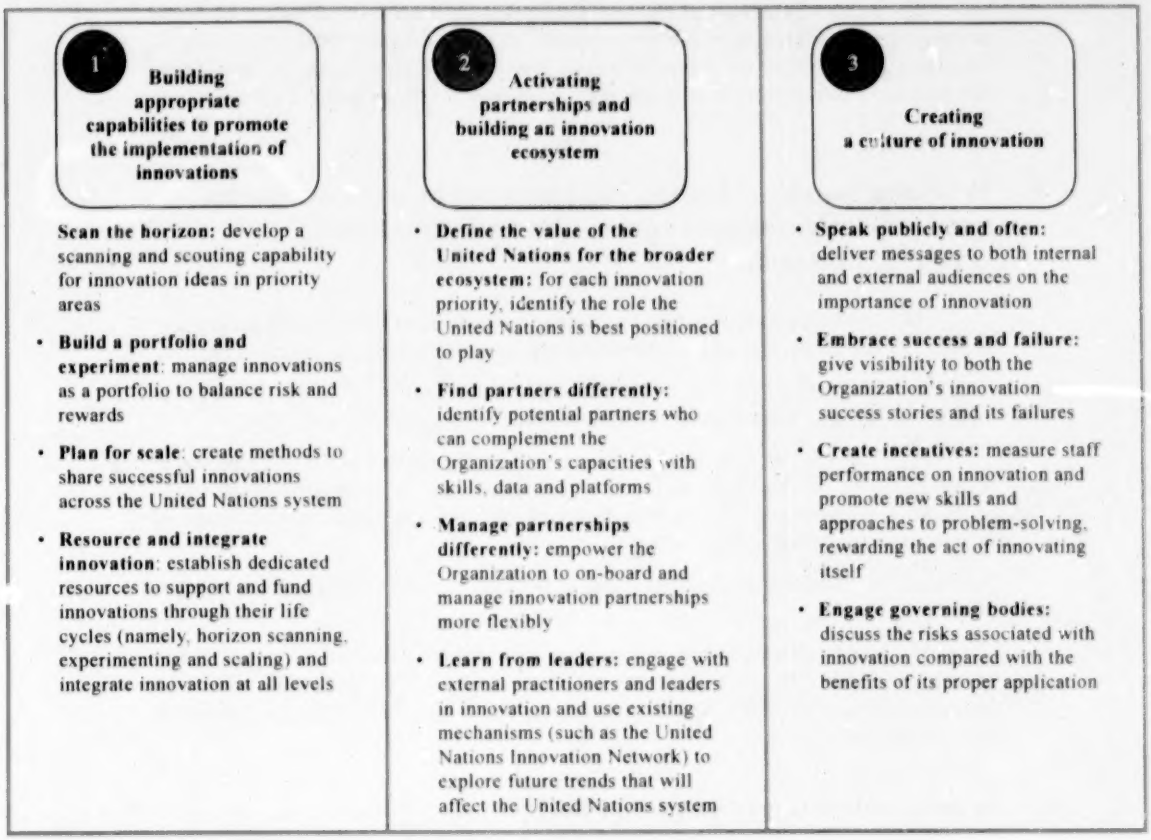
37. Executive heads were key to overcoming organizational resistance to change. Board members were encouraged to protect their innovators and help them to break through risk-averse and rigid parts of their organizations as they experimented and learned. Executive heads had to signal that experimentation was a positive behaviour, not only to programmatic teams, but also to parts of the organization that were key to enabling innovation, such as the legal teams, procurement offices and the auditors.

38. Communication was identified as an area within many United Nations organizations that was particularly ripe for change. It was pointed out that although the United Nations had a global role in shaping a better world, it did not have global reach. United Nations organizations needed to use clear, meaningful, inclusive and engaging language that would be inspiring and influential. Experience had shown that the most compelling communications combined real human stories, strategic messages and moral engagement. Digital technologies offered opportunities to strategically target audiences and measure the impact of communications. Several members stressed the importance of communicating specifically with young women and men — themselves, a prolific source of innovation — and of creating and expanding space for their contributions to the work of the United Nations. It was attested that investment in the capacity of the United Nations to use new platforms to reach beneficiaries had already paid off and would continue to do so.

D. Next steps

39. The Secretary-General tasked the United Nations Innovation Network with work with both its innovation experts and senior managers in the coming months to provide CEB with proposals and references on how to concretely implement the 12 action points (see figure IV).

Figure IV
Recommendations to promote innovation in the United Nations system


1
Building appropriate capabilities to promote the implementation of innovations
Scan the horizon: develop a scanning and scouting capability for innovation ideas in priority areas
• Build a portfolio and experiment: manage innovations as a portfolio to balance risk and rewards
• Plan for scale: create methods to share successful innovations across the United Nations system
• Resource and integrate innovation: establish dedicated resources to support and fund innovations through their life cycles (namely, horizon scanning, experimenting and scaling) and integrate innovation at all levels
2
Activating partnerships and building an innovation ecosystem
• Define the value of the United Nations for the broader ecosystem: for each innovation priority, identify the role the United Nations is best positioned to play
• Find partners differently: identify potential partners who can complement the Organization's capacities with skills, data and platforms
• Manage partnerships differently: empower the Organization to on-board and manage innovation partnerships more flexibly
• Learn from leaders: engage with external practitioners and leaders in innovation and use existing mechanisms (such as the United Nations Innovation Network) to explore future trends that will affect the United Nations system
3
Creating a culture of innovation
• Speak publicly and often: deliver messages to both internal and external audiences on the importance of innovation
• Embrace success and failure: give visibility to both the Organization's innovation success stories and its failures
• Create incentives: measure staff performance on innovation and promote new skills and approaches to problem-solving, rewarding the act of innovating itself
• Engage governing bodies: discuss the risks associated with innovation compared with the benefits of its proper application

40. In his closing remarks, the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of abiding by United Nations values and principles when innovating. He reiterated that innovation not only involved the use of sophisticated technologies, such as robots or drones, to deliver services in new ways, but could also mean simplifying rules, eliminating constraints or testing new working methods. It constituted a mental attitude, the will to change and the recognition that things could be done differently, better and more efficiently for the people the Organization served. With these tenets in mind, he urged the members to initiate action to bring about the necessary changes within their organizations. Specifically, the Secretary-General proposed and the Board agreed on the following next steps:

(a) **Develop an action plan.** Each organization across the United Nations system should develop an action plan to build the necessary architecture, partnerships and culture to encourage and scale innovation, in line with the 12 recommendations;

(b) **Create innovation structures.** Each organization should endeavour to create strategically placed structure or mechanism to support innovation. The form of such a structure or mechanism should be determined by the specific missions, capabilities, needs and barriers of the entity concerned;

(c) **Build an innovation toolkit.** The CEB secretariat should coordinate the development of an actionable toolkit under the leadership of the United Nations Innovation Network that would provide leading practices and guidance for United

Nations entities on how to foster and scale innovation across the United Nations system;

(d) **Leverage agents of change.** Given that innovative thinking can be found at every level, leaders should identify agents of change within their organizations, including members of the United Nations Innovation Network, the Young United Nations and other groups, and set up regular channels through which to engage with them.

V. Working lunch — United Nations system-wide action on gender parity, sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

41. The Board discussed measures to further advance gender parity and progress in addressing sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. It heard presentations by:

(a) The Senior Adviser on Policy, Ana Maria Menéndez, who provided an update on the implementation of the system-wide strategy on gender parity;

(b) The Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Jane Holl Lute, who delivered an update on the status of the Secretary-General's comprehensive strategy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse system-wide;

(c) The Victims' Rights Advocate, Jane Connors, who highlighted key aspects of her role;

(d) The Under-Secretary-General for Management, Jan Beagle, who, in her capacity as Chair of the CEB Task Force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system, spoke on outcomes of the first phase of work of the Task Force.

A. System-wide strategy on gender parity

42. Launched in September 2017 after an extensive consultation process involving more than 30 United Nations system entities, the system-wide strategy on gender parity is in its first year of implementation, which is advancing on the basis of gender strategies and implementation plans specific to and developed by each entity. To date, 21 CEB member organizations have submitted individualized implementation plans and are measuring progress towards the achievement of the gender parity targets set out in the strategy. Over the past 12 months, slight progress towards increasing the number of women among selected applicants to United Nations entities has already been made in some non-field entities.

43. Implementing the strategy goes hand in hand with transforming the institutional culture of the United Nations and promoting an inclusive, unbiased and diverse workplace. United Nations system leadership is critical in this regard and requires bold, creative and ambitious messages from the senior management of the Organization.

B. Initiatives of the Secretary-General to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse

44. In March 2016, the Secretary-General launched a comprehensive four-pronged strategy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (see figure V).

Figure V
Key elements and initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse

1
Prioritizing the rights and dignity of victims
• Appointment of Victims' Rights Advocate
• Introduction of tracking tool for provision of victim assistance
• Establishment of rust fund to support victim assistance services and projects
2
Ending impunity
• Implementation of mandatory training for field personnel
• Management letter to field-based United Nations entities on reporting requirements
• Establishment of circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations
• Launching of United Nations system-wide screening database
• Piloting of incident report Forms at field level
3
Engaging with civil society and external partners
• Establishment of Civil Society Advisory Board in 2018
• Holding of regular exchanges with civil society actors
4
Improving strategic communication for education and transparency
• Regular reporting on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse
• Launching of dedicated website (un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/)
• Development of mobile application for use by field personnel in 2018

C. Victims' Rights Advocate

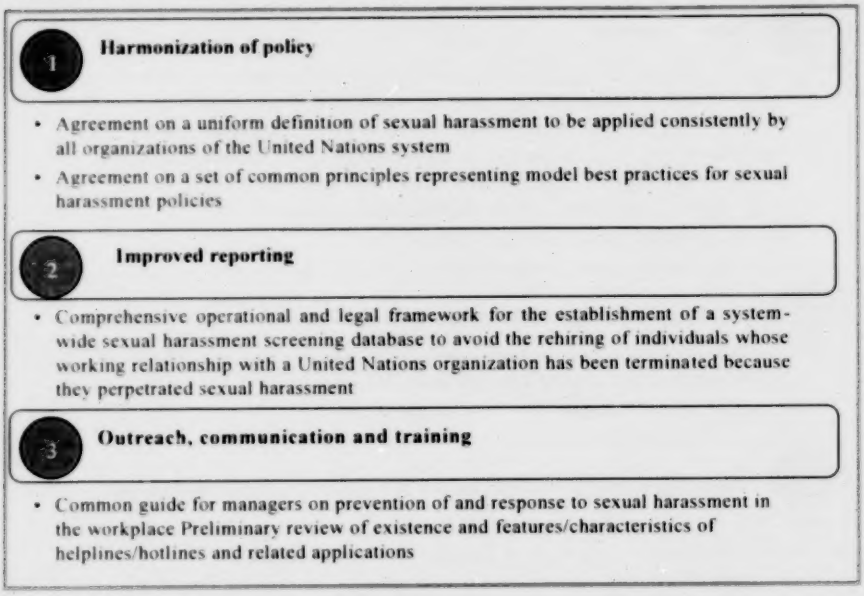
45. As a key component of his strategy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, the Secretary-General appointed a Victims' Rights Advocate in August 2017 to elevate victims' voices and put their rights and dignity at the forefront of prevention and response efforts. The role of the Victims' Rights Advocate is to strengthen system-wide integrated support for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by providing them with adequate protection, appropriate assistance and reliable recourse to justice.

46. An important objective of this work is to ensure that global policies are implemented at the field level. To that end, Field Victims' Rights Advocates have been appointed in select peacekeeping missions, with a view to expanding the programme to all peacekeeping missions in the future. Going forward, a comprehensive mapping exercise with respect to victims' rights approaches and response measures carried out in the United Nations system is also being planned, as is a strengthening of coordination in addressing paternity.

D. CEB Task Force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system

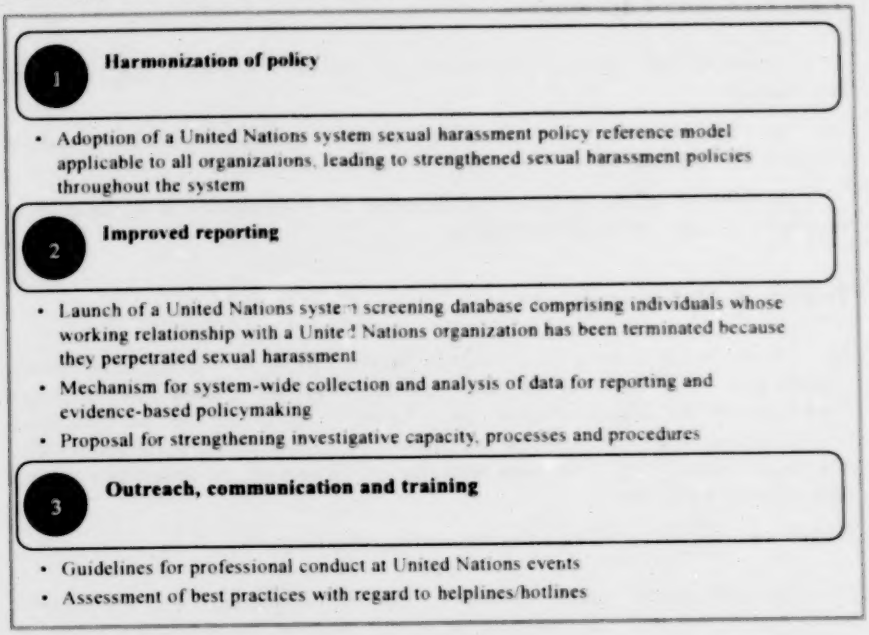
47. Since its establishment by CEB in November 2018, the Task Force has focused on a number of priority initiatives aimed at rapidly scaling up prevention and response efforts, protecting and supporting victims, strengthening investigative capacity and creating a safe and enabling work environment. The harmonization of sexual harassment policy, improvements in reporting and enhanced awareness-raising and communication have been identified as priority areas for action (see figure VI).

Figure VI
Phase I (November 2017–May 2018): deliverables of the Task Force


1
Harmonization of policy
• Agreement on a uniform definition of sexual harassment to be applied consistently by all organizations of the United Nations system
• Agreement on a set of common principles representing model best practices for sexual harassment policies
2
Improved reporting
• Comprehensive operational and legal framework for the establishment of a system-wide sexual harassment screening database to avoid the rehiring of individuals whose working relationship with a United Nations organization has been terminated because they perpetrated sexual harassment
3
Outreach, communication and training
• Common guide for managers on prevention of and response to sexual harassment in the workplace Preliminary review of existence and features/characteristics of helplines/hotlines and related applications

48. In the next phase of its work (see figure VII), the Task Force will place implementation at the centre of its efforts. The credibility of a zero-tolerance approach depends on an organization's ability to devise strong implementation mechanisms to complement policy frameworks and move from principle to action. Greater efforts are also needed to involve staff and assure them of proactive responses whereby perpetrators are held to account and victims receive the protection and assistance that they need.

Figure VII
Phase II (June 2018–November 2018): deliverables of the Task Force


1
Harmonization of policy
• Adoption of a United Nations system sexual harassment policy reference model applicable to all organizations, leading to strengthened sexual harassment policies throughout the system
2
Improved reporting
• Launch of a United Nations system screening database comprising individuals whose working relationship with a United Nations organization has been terminated because they perpetrated sexual harassment
• Mechanism for system-wide collection and analysis of data for reporting and evidence-based policymaking
• Proposal for strengthening investigative capacity, processes and procedures
3
Outreach, communication and training
• Guidelines for professional conduct at United Nations events
• Assessment of best practices with regard to helplines/hotlines

49. In the ensuing discussion, members of the Board:

(a) Affirmed the clear linkages among sexual harassment, unequal gender relations and power dynamics, and the need for greater empowerment of women staff and for gender parity in the workforce;

(b) Committed to strengthening capacities and instruments for reporting, investigating and supporting victims, and to enhancing the sharing of resources, expertise and best practices;

(c) Agreed to confront the informal culture of silence and permissiveness through principled leadership, greater transparency and consistent communication from the top;

(d) Reaffirmed that harassment of any type was antithetical to the principles and values of the United Nations and could not be tolerated;

(e) Supported the continuation of the Task Force and its focus on the identified priority actions;

(f) Issued a statement on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system, in which the leaders reiterated their firm commitment to upholding a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, strengthening victim-centred prevention and response efforts, and fostering a safe and inclusive work environment (see annex).

VI. Other matters

A. Endorsement of documents

50. Following the session, the Board electronically endorsed the following documents:

(a) Summary of conclusions of the High-level Committee on Management at its thirty-fifth session (12–13 April 2018) (CEB/2018/3);

(b) Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its thirty-fifth session (9–10 April 2018) (CEB/2018/4).

B. Tribute to Board members

51. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, William Lacy Swing; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein; and the Executive Secretary-General of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Shamshad Akhtar, all of whom were attending a CEB session for the last time during their respective tenures.

C. Dates and location of the forthcoming session

52. The CEB second regular session of 2018 will be held on 7 and 8 November 2018. The Board will meet entirely in retreat mode at the Greentree Estate in Manhasset, New York.

Annex

Note to correspondents

At the session of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination held in London, the Secretary-General led a special session on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system.

He reiterated that he was seriously concerned by all allegations of sexual harassment at the United Nations and that he had made addressing that issue a top priority.

In his remarks before the Board, composed of 31 chief executives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the Secretary-General stated that harassment of any kind offended the principles of what the United Nations stood for and undermined its core values and its work. He emphasized, once again, that sexual harassment had no place in the United Nations system and reaffirmed his personal commitment to upholding a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

The United Nations leaders engaged with the Secretary-General on a number of initiatives designed to urgently address this challenging issue across the United Nations family of organizations.

It was emphasized that addressing the issue meant making sure that all staff, both those affected by harassment and those who witnessed it, knew what to do and where to go in such cases. The Secretary-General had taken steps to boost support for victims, enhance the protection of whistle-blowers and improve the reporting and investigation of allegations.

It was also pointed out that sexual harassment, including sexual abuse and sexual violence, was rooted in historical power imbalances and the male-dominated culture that permeated governments, the private sector, international organizations and even areas of civil society. This had created obstacles to upholding zero-tolerance policies. To change this dynamic, the Secretary-General was putting greater power into the hands of women throughout the United Nations. Through his direct appointments, he had been able to reach gender parity in the Senior Management Group. He was also keen to see progress in other areas.

The Secretary-General called upon leaders and staff across the United Nations system to join him in driving cultural change to ensure a workplace where sexual harassment was never tolerated, abusers were held accountable and staff felt safe to report incidents. United Nations personnel and the general public should expect the United Nations to meet the highest standards. Leaders of the United Nations system were determined to ensure that these standards were upheld.

At the conclusion of the session, the Board issued the following statement:

Statement of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system

Sexual harassment results from a culture of discrimination and privilege, based on unequal gender relations and power dynamics. It has no place in the United Nations system.

Leaders of United Nations system organizations reiterate their firm commitment to upholding a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, strengthening victim-

centred prevention and response efforts, and fostering a safe and inclusive work environment.

The members of CEB are driving action in three key areas:

Reporting:

- Providing mechanisms such as 24-hour helplines for staff to report harassment and access support
- Establishing a system-wide database to avoid the rehiring of individuals who have perpetrated sexual harassment

Investigation and decision-making:

- Instituting fast-track procedures to receive, process and address complaints
- Recruiting specialized investigators, including women

Outreach and support:

- Mandatory training, providing guides for managers and harmonizing policies;
- Launching staff perception surveys to learn from experiences.

The members of Board will continue to work on changing the culture of our organizations. The United Nations must be a place where staff are valued and empowered to speak up and where sexual harassment is never tolerated.